POEMS AND PARODIES

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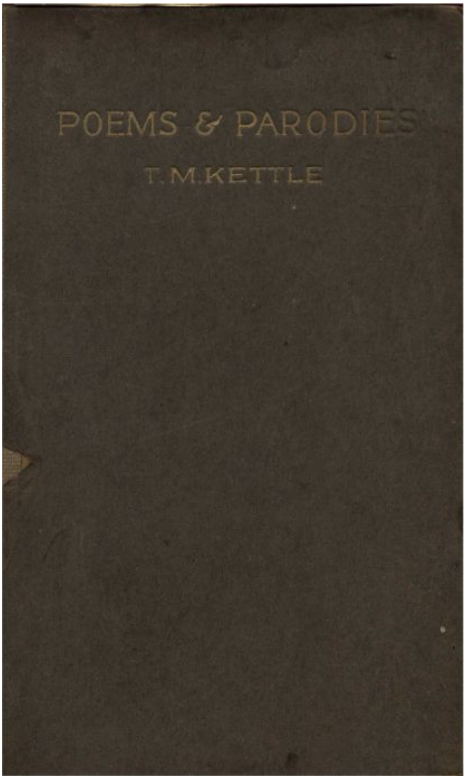
Produced by Al Haines.

POEMS & PARODIES

BY

T. M. KETTLE

DUBLIN
THE TALBOT PRESS



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T. M. Kettle

TOM KETTLE

1880-1916

Two simple words, charged now for some of us with sad and infinite memories. It is not the death of the Professor, nor of the soldier, nor of the politician--nor even of the poet or the essayist--that causes the heart-ache that we feel. It is the loss of that rare, charming, wondrous personality summed up in those two simple words, TOM KETTLE.

A genial cynic, a pleasant pessimist, an earnest trifler, he was made up of contradictions. A fellow of infinite jest--and infinite sadness. His prototypes were Hamlet or the Melancholy Jacques. Among the delightful essays he has left us in that charming little book, *The Day's Burden*, is one entitled "A new way of misunderstanding *Hamlet*." He was himself a veritable Hamlet in this twentieth century

Ireland. One may ask, did he quite understand himself? Master of paradox, enunciator of enigma, he was a paradox and an enigma in, and to, himself. Shall we seek now to pluck out the heart of his mystery? The lines are hackneyed beyond hope, but in this instance they apply in truth.

The personality of Kettle had in it something subtle; something essential yet elusive; something not to be defined. He was a great talker in the Johnsonian sense. As a story-teller, it was not so much the point of his tale that counted as his telling of it. The divagations from the text in which he loved to indulge were the delight of his auditors. With truth it may be said that his rich humour, his brilliant, mordant wit, caused his listeners to hang upon his words. And his outlook was so wide, his soul so big, his mind so broad, and a deep love of humanity so permeated him that his talk, or one might more fittingly say, his discourse, was educating and uplifting. But he was a man of moods, descending from heights of Homeric humour to the depths of a divine despair. Those privileged to hear him thus expounding will cherish the memory while they live. We, too, as it were, have "seen Shelley plain." He charmed, he fascinated. This, in truth, describes him for his spell wrought even on those who actually disliked him.

In the numerous notices printed of him since he died much has been written of the promise of his career. More appropriate it would be to write of his performance. He crowded into thirty-six years of life far more than most men achieve in twice that span. Now the orator is silent, the brilliant wit has ceased to sparkle, the skilful pen will ply no more. Tom Kettle knows at last the answer to the riddle that baffled him, the Riddle of the Universe.

Well may we mourn--

For Lycidas is dead;
Young Lycidas: dead ere his prime,
And hath not left his peer.

WILLIAM DAWSON.

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PERSONAL

"Memorial I would have
... a constant presence
with those that love me"

DEDICATION SONNET

TO MY WIFE

"Not the sea, only, wrecks the hopes of men,
Look deeper, there is shipwreck everywhere,"
So mourned the exquisite Roman's rich despair,
Too high in death for that ignoble pen.
Nero, his wrecker, is amply wrecked since then,
And all that Rome's a whiff of charnel air;
But to subdue Petronius' mal-de-mer
Have we found drugs? I pray you, What? and When?

Shipwreck, one grieves to say, retains its vogue:
Or let the keel win on in stouter fashion,
And look! your golden lie of Tir-na-n'Og
Is sunset and waste waters, chill and ashen--
Faith lasts? Nay, since I knew your yielded eyes,

I am content with sight .... of Paradise.

TO MY DAUGHTER BETTY, THE GIFT OF GOD

(ELIZABETH DOROTHY)

In wiser days, my darling rosebud, blown
To beauty proud as was your mother's prime,
In that desired, delayed, incredible time,
You'll ask why I abandoned you, my own,
And the dear heart that was your baby throne,
To dice with death. And oh! they'll give you rhyme
And reason: some will call the thing sublime,
And some decry it in a knowing tone.
So here, while the mad guns curse overhead,
And tired men sigh with mud for couch and floor,
Know that we fools, now with the foolish dead,
Died not for flag, nor King, nor Emperor,
But for a dream, born in a herdsman's shed,
And for the secret Scripture of the poor.

the field, before Guillemont, Somme,
September 4, 1916.

ON LEAVING IRELAND

(JULY 14, 1916)

The pathos of departure is indubitable.

I never felt my own essay "On saying Good-Bye" so profoundly *aux tréfonds du coeur*. The sun was a clear globe of blood which we caught hanging over Ben Edar, with a trail of pure blood

vibrating to us across the waves. It dropped into darkness before we left the deck. Some lines came to me, suggested by a friend who thought the mood cynical.

As the sun died in blood, and hill and sea
Grew to an altar, red with mystery,
One came who knew me (it may be over-much)
Seeking the cynical and staining touch,
But I, against the great sun's burial
Thought only of bayonet-flash and bugle-call,
And saw him as God's eye upon the deep,
Closed in the dream in which no women weep,
And knew that even I shall fall on sleep.

EPIGRAM

If grief, like fire, smoked up against our sight,
The Earth were scarfèd in eternal night.

EARLY POEMS

TO YOUNG IRELAND

(WRITTEN IN 1899)

Dead! art thou dead or sleepest, in this blank, twilight time,
When hearts are sere and pithless? Land of the sword and lyre!
Thy waxen lips are silent, thy brow is bound with rime,
Hast thou late wed with winter, child of earth's primal fire?

The sheathèd blade rusts foully, through bitter, barren years,

And harp and pen are bond slaves, thralls to thy children's shame.
We garner cockle harvests, vain words and little fleers.
From waste lands sown with rancour, search them with proving flame!

We droop'd, stark sons of warfare, we blushed and slunk from day,
While Love and Truth and Honour died in mere fretful fume.
Free brain, free brawn, is given us, then sweep we from our way
These shamers of our mother, this idle, noisome spume.

For, lo! an army gathers around a standard clean;
I gird me dinted armour, and press to touch the throng.
Hark! Hark! The minstrels' war-hymn in very strength serene,
My harp is harsh of utterance, yet take a pupil's song.

Then stout heart join our battle! who hail an eastern sun,
Our toil shall set this people upon earth's purest height.
Then faint heart join our battle! and if our sands be run,
At least we caoin a swan-lay upon the edge of night.

SOWING

(WRITTEN IN 1899)

One mocked: "Thy brain is mad with wine;
The fairies spin the threads of night,
And pour their vials of sour blight
About the roots of health, yet thine
And thou, ye garner into verse
Bright flowers to trick a solemn hearse:
The cowslip, maiden-love of spring,
The burning incense of the rose,
The austere lily, her that blows
By winter's marge--each gracious thing
Past or unborn. Weak, trusting fool!
Old Time shall file thee in his school."

"I know not Time, his last or first;
With master hands I despoil all
His hoarded sweetness and his gall.
I crush the aeons for my thirst,
And so am mad. Pencils of fire
Limn visions of soul-large desire.

In Faith I cast on frozen ground
An obscure life of sweat and tears;
In the far Autumn of the years
Men reap full harvests, springing round,
And judge them gifts of kindly chance,
My deed laughs through each mellow lance."

DREAMS AND DUTY

Life is an inconstant April laughing into May,
Weeping with the aftergust of March storms laid away,
Light o' love! Her mood is gracious, fondling sunbeams stray
Out across the cloud-smoke purple of her cloud robes gray.
Let us dream among the daisies, troll a roundelay
Where the gorse gold is lavished, and the lilies pray,
Mary's nuns, whose stainless gift is Heaven's chaliced ray,
Let us twine a wreath of science, let us play our play,
Ere we fight the fight of ages, one sweet prelude-day.

* * * * *

The stranger heard and mocked us from the usurped throne,
Reeled in his scornful laughter, eater of hearts, blood-blown.
But the Lord God heard and heeded, therefore we do not moan;
For He has whispered to us, 'The secret shuttles fly,
Ye know not warp or weaver, yet neither swerve or sigh,
The eater of hearts shall wither, the drinker of blood shall die.
I have set you labour, work it; I will give you increase,
For first is winter-ploughing, after, my guerdon, peace;

Ye shall pluck strength from sorrow, ripe when the sorrows cease;
Ye shall win strength and wisdom to break the stranger's rule,
But if ye slink and babble ye are but as the fools,
Ye are but as the stranger, fit for the thorny schools."

A SONG OF VENGEANCE

FOR COMMANDANT SCHEEPERS
(Murdered January 18, 1902)

It is done inexpiably; thrust him deep in shameful clay,
Charge his name with every foulness, rule the world's ear as you may-
-
But the shadow at your banquet that you cannot put away!

Weak you thought him, sickness-vanquished, given to your eager hate.
So you played him and you slew him with your feline shows of state,
Weak--and lo! the sanctifying touch of death has made him great.

As a seed that broadening splits the rock on which a palace stands,
As a trickling breach that godlike parts one land in hostile lands,
Is the memory of Scheepers and his slaying at your hands.

Hill and plain and stream shall guard it, town and fireside, phrase and song;
Young men's unsubdued aspiring, old men's striving wise and strong;
And though Hope die, Hatred may not for remembrance of his wrong.

Murdered leader--may God fold you in the mercy of His temple,
Sleep as sleep our unborn children, bravest hero and example--

Float the flag or sink for ever, your red eric shall be ample.

TRANSLATIONS

AT ACHENSEE, TIROL

(From the German of A. Pickler.--Died, 1893)

The old path up, the wood's ranked gloomy legions,
The lap and the rustle of the lake behind,
And, roused by these, from Death's more timely regions
The old thoughts fluttering in a lonely mind;

About my way the pine-stems thick and thicker
Huddle, the mossed stone drips abundantly,
And, thro' the screen of woven branches, flicker
The bright and heaving waves of Achensee.

Pinewood and primrose scents, the air has mixt them;
Poised butterflies, a shining sun-bathed fleet,
Sky's blue, gaunt granite jags, and buoyed betwixt them,
The cloud-fleece flushing with the day's defeat.

The spell is on me, nor can aught deliver;
Slowly my spirit fails from life and light,
And Past and Future like a pauseless river,
Slide darkly down into a darker night.

The red glow wans, the blackbird's trill and quaver
Dies in the sudden gloom, the broad world sleeps;
And, mixed with moon-fire flakes, the billows waver,
As though dead hands tossed vainly in their deeps.

I think of the high dead, and that all-daring
First bard whom Orcus' self might not withstand,

I think of his vast love, and fruitless faring,
To pluck one rose from Proserpine's hand.

The Past is an ill riddle, over-subtle,
The Thing-to-Be a rumour of a cloud,
Would know the last weft of Fate's whirring shuttle?
You *shall* know, when they wind you in your shroud.

Innsbruck, 18th July, 1904.

THE MONKS

A translation from EMILE VERHAEREN.
Dedicated to Father Benedict, 1905.

I do invoke you here, Monks Apostolical,
Fountains of dawn, torches of faith, wrought candlesticks;
Stars shedding day across the ages mystical;
Builders whose walls for scutcheon bear the Crucifix.

Hermits who sat on white, high mountains for a throne;
Hewn marble quick with will, and strength, and angry truth;
Preachers with arms uplift and long sleeves loosely blown
Over bowed heads, and hearts gnawn of the sateless tooth.

Windows athrob with dawn, rich with all Eastern dyes;
Vases of chastity whose fulness might not cease;
Mirrors whose depths enfold, as lakes the dreaming skies,
Hills where our dreams have breath, fair valleys brimmed with peace.

Seers whose souls, foreknowing death's enfranchisement,
Walked secretly where walks the mere flesh of no feet;
Titans whose breath was more than squadroned argument;
Kings strange to Rome set up in Rome's imperial seat.

Swords hung above the pride of kings and emperors;
Lords of a prouder crown and a more grievious loss;

Warriors whose flag was spread in more tremendous wars,
Slayers of heresy with great blows of the Cross.

Arches and aqueducts of Christian sanctity,
Pillars of silver, channels pouring from the East
Rivers of grace at which the peoples thirstily
Have drunk, and quaffed desire for the unending Feast.

Tocsins with war and wounds in your most sombre roll;
Clarions whose proud, full throats salute the captain Christ;
Towers of the sun, whose crosses wear an aureole
Litten of that far Sun Who was the Sacrificed.

MISCELLANEOUS

THE LADY OF LIFE

I sat with her, and spoke right goldenly
    Of love and beauty, and because her hair
    Brushed me, I plucked down Sirius like a pear,
To braid it, and had laughter for my fee;
Yea, suing her to heavier slavery.
    Had all but plucked the fruitage of her lips,
    When, lo! inked clouds and absolute eclipse,
Courteous, but unmistakable ennui.

Then did I mind me of the sorrow wailed
    Thro' poets' books, and how the streaming torch
Of suns greater than Sirius has failed,
And as I shambled out the menial's door
    I heard new feet sound in the statued porch

And salutations I had heard before.

WHEN OTHERS SEE US AS WE SEE OURSELVES!

Day, with his blotting trumpet, overthrew
My city of dream, and, with his marshalled spears,
My thought that had the unperforming years
Amended and laid the base of heaven true;
But pitying, signed me priest with chrismal dew,
And I went telling of expatriate tears,
Of Hate cast out with all his sworded peers,
And tower-tops spiring to the gods anew.
One gibed, one wept, one with his drowséd air
Chilled me to very stone, but no man hearkened;
So to my love I went--ah! once love darkened
Her eyes, and in that darkness I could hide--
Why should they couch them? In her alien stare
I knew she knew all Christs I had denied.

ENNUI

I saw the loath moon rise,
The sun go sweatily down;
There was famine of sleep in his eyes;
She was a floating frown.

They nodded heavily
Over an ancient roof,
With a pout o' the shoulders, she,
He with a grind o' the hoof.

And the moon said to the sun:
"Another day to irk us!"

The sun to the touzled moon,
"Imagine it a circus."

BALLAD AUTUMNAL

(In which Any Old Fool of an idealistic turn, explains--probably without the palest colour of truth--to Any Other, infected with the same disease, the failure of their lives, labours, and dreams, and the triumph of the wise of this world.)

Hair greying, ashen eyes, uncomely ridges,
Autumn of things ill-done, and things undone:
How all that water, slipped beneath the bridges,
Chills the adieux of our defeated sun!
What paltry, unresisted jettison
Of dear hopes held, and there the graveyard West,
With mud, miasma, mastless hulks, and midges!--
We have not lived as wisely as the rest.

That wasteful trick of yours, that gust prodigious
Of dreams too great for their comparison,
Blew stars ablaze, but drowned us in the ditches.
Sad, generous, valiant, tired ephemeron!
Had we but coined the vision when it shone
We, too, had ruled, and mocked the dispossessed.
Well! we have rags, the prudent have the riches--
We have not lived as wisely as the rest.

They squeezed us, and forgot: your Je m'en fiche's
Struck in too bloodily to pass for fun.
Our bread was nibbled by the water-witches,
All that we have is given, and is gone.
Some penny, wheedled for a currant bun,
Some shirtless, soapless starveling, uncaressed,
Still thanks us for, but not our fed ambitious--
We have not lived as wisely as the rest.

ENVOI

Prince, lift your heart up out of Acheron,
Death bows us gravely to that cleaner test.
Yea! when all books are closed, all races run,
We may have lived as wisely as the rest.

THE LOST BALL

(A golfing rhapsody suggested by "The Lost Chord.")

Playing one day at the seaside, I was topping my balls on the tees,
And the sand and the bent were littered with fragments of double D's;
Piffle supreme I was playing, and varying "slice" with "pull,"
But I hit one ball a wallop like a kick of a Spanish bull.

It whistled its way towards Heaven in a rocket's magic flight;
It cancelled the crimson sunset like the shroud of a moonless night;
It knocked the paint off a rainbow and scattered the stars like bees;
And sped thro' the stellar spaces as tho' it would never cease.

It looped the loop like Pégoud in parabolic curves;
It was salve to my wounded feelings and balm to my ruffled nerves;
It clove my opponent's gizzard like the stab of a Lascar's knife;
And produced the hardest swearing I have ever heard in my life.

I have sought in the bent and the bushes that one magnificent ball;
It may be Antartic crystals were broken by its fall;
It may be that Death as Caddy may light on the spot it fell;
I may have holed out in Heaven or find myself trapped in Hell.

POLITICAL

PARNELL

(For the unveiling, 1st October, 1911)

Tears will betray all pride, but when ye mourn him,
Be it in soldier wise;
As for a captain who hath gently borne him,
And in the midnight dies.

Fewness of words is best; he was too great
For ours or any phrase.
Love could not guess, nor the slipped hound of hate
Track that soul's secret ways.

Signed with a sign, unbroken, unrevealed,
His Calvary he trod;
So let him keep, where all world-wounds are healed
The silences of God.

Yet is he Ireland's too: a flaming coal
Lit at the stars, and sent
To burn the sin of patience from her soul,
The scandal of content.

A name to be a trumpet of attack;
And, in the evil stress,
For England's iron No! to fling her back
A grim granatic Yes.

He taught us more, this best as it was last:
When comrades go apart
They shall go greatly, cancelling the past,
Slaying the kindlier heart.

Friendship and love, all clean things and unclean,
Shall be as drifted leaves,
Spurned by our Ireland's feet, that queenliest Queen
Who gives not but receives.

So freedom comes, and comes no other wise;
He gave--"The Chief"--gave well;
Limned in his blood across your clearing skies
Look up and read; Parnell!

THE HOUSE OF LORDS: AN EPITAPH

So you proscribe, and you forbid
Peace, and the trooping ghosts of hate
Enfranchise of the coffin-lid--
Your lordships' lordship speaks too late.

That word had held when yours, for you,
Thieving and reaving smote us first:
If souls were crooked, swords were true;
They took and kept because they durst.

Still, though the pride of naked swords
Passed to a meaner, stouter hand,
You said, and it was done, my lords,
Yours was the law, and yours the land.

You clove the priest, you robbed the shrine,
With spoil of Paul and Peter fat,
Brimmed altar-cups with altar-wine
To toast your new Magnificat.

The poor, who are the lords of death,
To you were mud in foundered ways;
Your sun was red Elizabeth,
Your noon, the Dutchman's Penal days.

Hunger and halters, grey despair,
Marah of exile, coastless seas,
Baal for master-minister--
You gave, my lords, and took your ease.

And then, in Paris, patience broke;
"Who is this thing that should oppress?"
Men asked: "And shall we bear his yoke.
This idle whiff of nothingness?"

That was your lordships' epitaph;
Still might you sell a nation's soul,
Spit on its tomb, and yawn and laugh,
But, thief to thief, the judgment stole.

This Ireland whom my lords despised--
Languid behind inverted thumbs--
She who believed and agonised
Leads on the loud, victorious drums.

Wave huddled wave, and now the last
Havocs your castle, built of sand--
We take the future, you the past,
Ours is the State, the Flag, the Land.

REASON IN RHYME

Will Watson, of the still unanchored art;
What random gust, what overwhelming sea
Has riven you apart
From us, and from the flagship of the free?
You whose rich phrase, and vibrant, wont to be
Trumpet and drum of onset and attack;
Who, when of Abdul's ways you stooped to sing,
Would give us just the dire, full-throated thing;
Now, when that much-damned man has got the sack,
You change your tune, and make to pipe us back
From honour, and the task of Liberty!
Why argue, though? The plain position is
You are mistaken in your premises.
You blind your sight with hot, emotional mists,

Your way of thought is greatly too morose
And moist and lachrymose,
For us, a muddled State's last realists.
We Irish, to be brief,
Are nowise grievers for the sake of grief.
I pray you, dry those sympathetic tears,
They rust the will; and, Will, your nation's sin
Is no dead shame, meet to be covered in,
But a live fact that sears.
Cancel the past? Soothly when it befalls
That ye amend the present, and are just,
Go knock your head on Dublin Castle walls:
Are they irrelevant, historic dust,
Or a hard present-tense?
Search through the large print of the Statute Book
For your much-valued Lords' benevolence,
And swept in vision westward, snatch a look
At that dim land, where hunger claims to be
The honoured guest in every family;
And the slain sun writes, in a scribble of shame,
The word of utter Hell, Clanricarde's name.
Go South and North;
Weep, if you will, along the dismal quays,
Watching the unreturning ships go forth
To fling our seed of strength and hope and worth
In far, untributary ways.
And then the soul is something--at least in verse.
Ours, poet, is to be a thing of straw,
A stained, numb thing, that sits without the law
Of yours, great master of the universe?
Most nobly planned! But, Watson, there's a text--
Done in stout English in King James's reign--
Which says that souls are not to be annexed,
Not for the whole world's gain.
Cancel the past! Why, yes! We, too, have thought
Of conflict crowned and drowned in olives of peace;
But when Cuchullin and Ferdiadh fought
There lacked no pride of warrior courtesies,
And so must this fight end.
Bond, from the toil of hate we may not cease:

Free, we are free to be your friend.
And when you make your banquet, and we come,
Soldier with equal soldier must we sit,
Closing a battle, not forgetting it.
With not a name to hide,
This mate and mother of valiant "rebels" dead
Must come with all her history on her head.
We keep the past for pride:
No deepest peace shall strike our poets dumb:
No rawest squad of all Death's volunteers,
No rudest man who died
To tear your flag down in the bitter years,
But shall have praise, and three times thrice again,
When at that table men shall drink with men.

ASQUITH IN DUBLIN

(AUGUST, 1912)

You stepped your steps, and the music marched, and the torches tossed
As you filled your streets with your comic Pentecost,
And the little English went by and the lights grew dim;
We, dumb in the shouting crowd, we thought of Him.

Of Him, too great for our souls and ways,
Too great for laughter or love, praise or dispraise,
Of Him, and the wintry swords, and the closing gloom--
Of Him going forth alone to His lonely doom.

No shouts, my Dublin then! Not a light nor a cry--
You kept them all till now, when the little English go by!

ULSTER

(A REPLY TO RUDYARD KIPLING)

The red, redeeming dawn
Kindled in Easter skies,
Falls like God's judgment on
Lawyers, and lords, and lies.
What care these evil things,
Though menaced and perplexed,
While Kipling's banjo strings
Blaspheme a sacred text?

Never did freemen stand,
Never were captains met,
From Dargai to the Rand,
From Parnell to De Wet,
Never, on native sod,
Weak Justice fared the worst,
But Kipling's Cockney "Gawd"
Most impotently cursed.

So now, when Lenten years
Burgeon, at last, to bless
This land of Faith and Tears
With fruitful nobleness,
The poet, for a coin,
Hands to the gabbling rout
A bucketful of Boyne
To put the sunrise out.

"Ulster" is ours, not yours,
Is ours to have and hold,
Our hills and lakes and moors
Have shaped her in our mould.
Derry to Limerick Walls
Fused us in battle flame;
Limerick to Derry calls
One strong-shared Irish name.

We keep the elder faith,
Not slain by Cromwell's sword;

Nor bribed to subtler death
By William's broken word.
Free from those chains, and free
From hate for hate endured,
We share the liberty
Our lavish blood assured.

One place, one dream, one doom,
One task and toil assigned,
Union of plough and loom
Have bound us and shall bind.
The wounds of labour healed,
Life rescued and made fair--
There lies the battlefield
Of Ulster's holy war.

TO IRELAND

Men so worthy
Suffered for Thee,
Men so poor can die;
Then come gather
All, or rather
Those who ask not why.

WAR POEMS

PADDY

(After Mr. Kipling)

I went into the talkin' shop to see about the Bill;
The Premier 'e ups and says: "We're waitin' ... waitin' still!"
The Tories grinned, and Balfour strung our gamble Haman-high,
I outs into the street again, and to meself sez I:
O, it's Paddy this, and Paddy that, an' "A cattle-driven crew!"
But 'twas "Murphy o' the Munsters!" when the trump of battle blew.
When the wind of battle blew, my boys, when the blast of battle blew,
It was Burke, and Shea and Kelly when we marched to Waterloo.

I looked into a newspaper to see about the land
That bred the man who broke the sin that Bonaparte planned;
They'd room for cricket scores, and tips, and trash of every kind,
But when I asked of Ireland's cause, it seemed to be behind.
For it's Paddy this, and Paddy that, and "Don't annoy us, please!"
But it's "Irish Rifles forward--Fast!" when the bullets talk like bees,
When the bullets yawn like bees, my boys, when the bullets yawn like bees,
It's "Connaught blood is good enough" when they're chanting R.I.P's.

Yes! Sneerin' round at Irishmen, and Irish speech and ways
Is cheaper--much--than snatchin' guns from battle's red amaze:
And when the damned Death's-Head-Dragoons roll up the ruddy tide
The *Times* won't spare a Smith to tell how Dan O'Connell died.
For it's Paddy this, and Paddy that, and "The Fifth'll prate and prance!"
But it's "Corks and Inniskillings--Front!" when Hell is loose in France,
When Clare and Kerry take the call that crowns the shrapnel dance,
O, it's "Find the Dublin Fusiliers!" when Hell is loose in France.

We ain't no saints or scholars much, but fightin' men and clean,
We've paid the price, and three times thrice for Wearin' o' the Green.
We held our hand out frank and fair, and half forgot Parnell,
For Ireland's hope and England's too--and it's yours to save or sell.
For it's Paddy this, and Paddy that, "Who'll stop the Uhlan blade?"
But Tommy Fitz from Malahide, and Monaghan's McGlade,
When the ranks are set for judgment, lads, and the roses droop and fade,

It's "Ireland in the firin' line!" when the price of God is paid.

SERGEANT MIKE O'LEARY

It was Sergeant Mike O'Leary who broke the barricade,
Who took the chance, and won the Cross that crowns the bayonet trade;
'Twas "M'anam do Dhia," and "How's your heart," and "How could we forget?"
But Michael from Inchigeela will fill a ballad yet.

Oh! a fair and pleasant land is Cork for wit and courtesy,
Ballyvourney East and Baile Dubh and Kilworth to the sea:
And when they light the turf to-night, spit, stamp, swear as of yore,
It's the Sergeant Mike O'Leary's ghosts that ward the southern shore.

A NATION'S FREEDOM

Word of the Tsar! and the drowse malign is broken;
The stone is rolled from the tomb and Poland free,
This is the strong evangel. The guns have spoken;
And the scribble of flame of the guns is Liberty.

Have you not met her, my lords, a-walk in the garden,
Ranging the dawn, even she, the three times dead?
Nay! But in bondage, sundered from light and pardon--
But now the water is wine, and the marriage read.

Word of the Tsar! My lords, I think of another
Crowned with dolour, forbidden the sun abased,
Bloodied, unbroken, abiding--Ah! Queen, my Mother,
I have prayed the feet of the Judgment of God to haste.

Count me the price in blood that we have not squandered,
Spendthrifts of blood from our cradle, wastefully true,
Name me the sinister fields where the Wild Geese wandered,
Lille and Cremona and Landen and Waterloo.

When the white steel-foam swept on the tidal onset,
When the last wave lapsed, and the sea turned back to its sleep,
We were there in the waste and the wreckage, Queen of the Sunset!
Paying the price of the dreams that cannot sleep.

The altar is set; we uplift again the chalice;
The priest is in purple; the bell booms to the sacrifice.
The trumpets summon to death, and Ireland rallies--
Tool or free? We have paid, and over-paid, the price.

Word of the Tsar! And Russia rises to vision,
Poland and Ireland--thus, my lords, was an augured fate.
The days draw in, and the ways narrow down to decision--
Will they chaffer, and cheapen, and ruin, or yield to be great?

Written in Belgium, August, 1914

A SONG OF THE IRISH ARMIES

A wind blew out of the Prussian plain;
It scourged Liege, and it broke Louvain,
And Belgium shook with the tramp of Cain,
That a Kaiser might be mad.
"Iron is God!"--and they served him well--
"Honour a mark for shot and shell."
So they loosed the devils out of Hell
From Birr to Allahabad.

THE OLD SOLDIERS SING:

But we took them from Mons to the banks of the Marne,
And helped them back on their red return;
We can swim the Rhine if the bridges burn,
And Mike O'Leary's the lad!

Not for this did our fathers fall;
That truth, and pity, and love, and all
Should break in dust at a trumpet call,
Yea! all things clean and old.
Not to this had we sacrificed:
To sit at the last where the slayers diced,
With blood-hot hands for the robes of Christ,
And snatch at the Devil's gold.

THE NEW SOLDIERS SING:

To Odin's challenge we cried Amen!
We stayed the plough, and laid by the pen,
And we shouldered our guns like gentlemen,
That the wiser weak should hold.

Blood on the land, and blood on the sea?
So it stands as ordained to be,
Stamp, and signet, and guarantee
Of the better ways we knew.

Time for the plough when the sword has won;
The loom will wait on the crashing gun,
And the hands of peace drop benison
When the task of death is through.

OLD AND NEW SOLDIERS SING:

Then lift the flag of the Last Crusade!
And fill the ranks of the Last Brigade!
March on to the fields where the world's re-made,
And the Ancient Dreams come true!

xxx

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